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STATE FOR IIP/G/WHA, INR/R/MR, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, INR/IAA

AMEMBASSY FOR PAO/IO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [CI](#) [BL](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - BOLIVIA MORALES INAUGURATION

¶1. On January 23, government-owned, editorially independent "La Nacion" (circ. 3,800) carried an op-ed by international commentator Raul Sohr entitled, "The Indian and the Lady have the Word." Quote:

"Evo Morales' invitation for Lagos and President-elect Michelle Bachelet to attend his inauguration is a clear signal. It is a hand extended to the Chilean people and a chance not easily repeated.... This is a key moment, a window of opportunity.... If anyone has the political authority to negotiate with Chile, it is Evo Morales. In sum, the first Indian and the first woman elected in South America...have the chance to go down in history as those who restored diplomatic relations and a rapprochement between the two nations."

¶2. On January 22, conservative, independent "La Tercera" (circ. 102,000) carried an article entitled, "Memo for Michelle Bachelet: What to do with Evo Morales," in which Alvaro Vargas Llosa gives the new Chilean president advice on relations with Bolivia. Quote:

"Don't think that because you are a leader of the left that political affinity will weigh more than interests.... Lula and Chavez will try to influence Morales and you will have to get Brazil to play in favor of Chile.... Use (former President Ricardo) Lagos as ambassador... Pay attention to the signals. The messages Morales sent Chile are interesting, though unclear. Morales' insistence that Chile be represented at the highest possible level at his inauguration and his promise to 'responsibly' address the issue of a passage to the Pacific are not minor coming from the man who frustrated the export of Bolivia's natural gas through a Chilean port and forced Carlos Mesa to make the controversy with Chile his term's most important issue."

¶3. On January 21, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record "El Mercurio" (circ. 116,807) ran a weekly round-up column entitled, "Morales' Inauguration." Quote:

"Evo Morales will take office with unquestionable legitimacy and a warm domestic and international welcome, but with marked uncertainty. It is believed on this occasion there are guarantees of stability given the new president's wide popular and foreign support, but the lack of institutions in Bolivia and its serious social problems make that support precarious.... The materialization of international cooperation will depend on the distance Morales chooses to keep from Hugo Chavez and Fidel Castro, the treatment he gives foreign investors, and the degree of governance he exhibits. Brazil will play an important role given its interest in Bolivia's gas fields and because of its role as mediator between Bolivia and the U.S. The influence of the U.S., which wants to eradicate narcotics trafficking and is Bolivia's most important supplier of aid, is also at stake."

KELLY